

EAST COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

Meeting of January 7, 2009

Eastern Montgomery Regional Services Center
3300 Briggs Chaney Road
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904

Members Present: Kim Bobola, Ph.D. (Chair); Bill Strassberger (Parliamentarian); Colleen Ionata (Vice Chair); David Kochanski, Esq.; G. Stanley Doore; Allan Mulligan; Vanessa Ali; Sheala Durant; Alfreda Hunt Payne, Ph.D.; Anthony Ramirez; Benoy Thomas; Marva R. Deskins, Esq.; Amjad Chaudhry; Thomas Aylward and Dwayne Parris.

Members Absent: John Thomas; Eric Luedtke; and John Fausti, Esq.

Staff: Chuck Crisostomo (Asst. Director, Eastern Montgomery Regional Services Center) and Gwen Haney (Program Specialist, EMRSC)

Guests: Mara M. Parker (Staff, Councilmember Marc Elrich's office), Barbara Foresti (White Oak Master Plan/Quaint Acres), and Stuart Rochester.

Citizen's Forum: Chair Bobola welcomed everyone. Guests were asked to introduce themselves to the Board. No concerns were raised.

Call to Order: The chair called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Chair Bobola asked for a review of the minutes of the ECCAB Meeting of December 3, 2008.

[January 7, 2009 - 1] A motion to approve the minutes of December 3 was offered. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Director's Report: Chuck Crisostomo, Assistant Director

- The January newsletter, an updated list of Board members, and an e-mail from the Director were passed out;
- The newly initiated, free Legal Advice Clinics have gotten off to a good start. The clinics are held on the first and second Thursday of each month;
- Montgomery College has entered into a partnership with the Eastern Montgomery Regional Services Center (EMRSC) and, beginning in February, the college will be providing two courses, Spanish I and Creative Writing at the Center;

- EMRSC will serve as one of five locations for the County Executive to host his annual Budget Forums. It will take place on January 29, at 7:00 pm. Executive Leggett is expected to be in attendance;
- The county is moving forward to bring 311 service to the community. The 311 office staff will be trained to answer general questions across all departments freeing other departments from individually providing this service. They will start with a trial in the fall 2009 and hope to be in full operation in 2010;
- The Office of Community Partnerships, under the Office of the County Executive, will host a Regional Faith Community Meeting at EMRSC on January 22, at 7:00 pm. This will provide a time for representatives of faith-based organizations to come together to address community issues;
- Some East County Citizen Advisory Board members' terms will be expiring soon. The county will soon be releasing an announcement to fill the Board's empty seats.

Chair's Report: Kim Bobola

- Bid everyone a Happy New Year and thanked all for their participation over the past year;
- Noted that a letter from Art Holmes was received, in response to contact by the Outreach Committee regarding safety issues associated with the relocation of the Burtonsville Post Office. Asked Board members to consider whether further action would be needed;
- Asked the Board members to consider a proposal from the Outreach Committee to move forward with a Youth Essay Contest;
- Advised Board members of a meeting with the County Executive on February 3, whereby Board Presidents are given 15 minutes to talk about matters concerning their regions. Sources of evidence to support this presentation are varied and can include minutes, surveys, forums, and committee reports. Last year's notes are in the "Occasional Notes" packets provided. Over the next month the Chair will look to Board members for input;
- Anise Key Brown, EMRSC Director, will send a message to individual Board members whose term is coming to an end. Members who wish to continue serving may respond by submitting a letter of interest;
- Washington Adventist Hospital will host a ribbon cutting ceremony on January 8;
- The County Council will hear testimony regarding the ICC on January 13;
- A training on County Ethics and the State Open Meeting Act will be held on January 15 at the county's Executive Office Building. Please copy Anise Brown and Chuck Crisostomo if you register to attend;

- The County Executive's Budget Forum, on January 29, provides background information and the opportunity for the County Executive to interact directly with the community;

Mara Parker (for Councilmember Elrich)

- County Executive Leggett's Office of Community Partnerships together with the Jewish Community Relations Council are co-sponsoring the "Yes Montgomery Can" project being held on January 16 and 17, in conjunction with the Martin Luther King Day of Service event. The purpose of the initiative is to mobilize community residents in support of their neighbors. A \$100,000 matching donation has been offered;
- An increase in crime is being seen, largely in break-ins of homes and businesses and car thefts. Police caution people not to leave valuable items visible in their cars. Chief Granger is proposing changes in looking at immigrant offenders;
- The upcoming meeting of the County Council on Tuesday, January 13 will look at parking of commercial and recreational vehicles on streets;
- A public hearing on January 15 will address the disproportionate number (60%) of police retiring on disability. The problem is complicated by having no partial disability option and no provision for regular revisits of need, among other factors. Proposed changes include expanding the three-doctor Board to four doctors and bringing policies more closely aligned with those of the Department of Fire and Rescue. Fire and Rescue disability retirements are about 15-20 percent;
- The economic recession is predicted to last 18-24 months, which is the greatest concern regarding the current budget. The teacher pension fund may take a hit if the state discontinues its support;
- The traffic light Chris Jones wants put in on Route 198 was put on hold but is now looking more favorable. Concern remains that the light will cause a back-up for east-west traffic. Stuart Rochester added that the traffic light is the only remaining issue for Chris Jones to proceed with his shopping center and without the light, he could not go on;
- Chair Bobola added that the Council Report of the Code Enforcement Work Group has been released and can be found on the county's web site. A representative of the Work Group will speak at this Board's meeting in February.

Committee Reports

Outreach Committee: Marva Deskins, Chair

- Marva Deskins explained the essay contest is a community outreach project and will involve all high school seniors in the Eastern Montgomery region. Winners will be

honored at a ceremony on April 25th and will receive monetary scholarship awards. Four proposed topics were read and input was requested. Shaela Durant suggested that questions be aimed at getting students to focus on issues pertaining specifically to East County;

- Fredda Hunt Payne shared her experience at a Labquest meeting on Dec. 18, which was a dedication for FDA Building #1. She visited Staples and Adventist Food and Book store. Chair Bobola reminded everyone of the planned tour of FDA in the spring. Stan Doore suggested the tour include the route from Industrial Parkway to get a feel for the likely traffic congestion that is foreseen;
- Allan Mulligan reported on his involvement with the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service and Celebration being held at EMRSC on January 19, from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm. The event will consist of opportunities for residents to volunteer their services on community projects and to participate in family oriented activities in celebration of this day.

Services Committee: Anthony Ramirez, Chair

- The committee has been learning more about the progress of the ICC. Anthony Ramirez has been in contact with the State Department of Transportation's Community Outreach representative who is willing to address the status of the ICC with the East County community;
- Chair Bobola presented the Board with the options of either having a separate ICC forum or having it included in a Board meeting. The need to revisit the ICC matter was discussed and it was determined that a progress update would be beneficial. Reasons supporting it included the time lapse, new residents to the area, and changes from the initial plan;
- Anthony Ramirez reported that concerns remain for increased crime and pedestrian safety associated with the new White Oak Recreation Center and that these issues are still being looked into. Sheala Durant has been tasked with speaking to Loren McNeal and inviting her to an ECCAB meeting.

Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee: Tom Aylward, Chair

- Tom Aylward attended a presentation by the State Highway Department regarding Routes 198 and 28 in Burtonsville. He stated that the main focus is how to create traffic patterns that make these routes a better corridor for businesses and not an alternative to the ICC. One option of the Highway Department's current plan would remove traffic lights and he suggests the Board should continue to monitor what happens;

- Tom Aylward suggested Tech Road, Industrial Parkway and Route 29 will become a critical traffic area and that the Board should be proactive in recommending plans that will be supported by Transit Authorities.

Old Business :

- Chair Bobola noted that the Board received a response from Art Holmes regarding safety issues associated with the relocation of the Burtonsville Post Office. His response indicated that the Office of Traffic Studies will conduct a study and report back to the Board. The matter was referred back to the Services Committee for monitoring;
- Chair Bobola asked for a motion to allow the Outreach Committee to move forward with the Youth Essay Contest.

[January 7, 2009 - 1] A motion to approve the contest was offered. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved. No discussion was requested. Chair Bobola thanked all assisting with this project.

- Chair Bobola suggested Board members review last year's list of priorities in their committees in order to provide recommendations for this year's meeting with the County Executive.

New Business: None

Announcements: None

The meeting was adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

The next meeting of ECCAB is scheduled for February 4, 2009.